

## Pretty in Punk by fearofsilence

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**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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**Summary:**

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“I was,” confirms Steve. “Friday?”

# Pretty in Punk

## Author's Note:

Day 3: Stranger Fusion!

The Pretty in Pink AU that's not really a Pretty in Pink AU.

Sorry this is late and bad. I worked on it all day and then got drunk and fell asleep so...

If I had more time, I would've included a few scenes with Joyce and Will, and probably would've made Samantha a character as well. I really want her and Jonathan to be friends.

But I rushed it, so here it is.

Also, not sure if this is a modern AU or not. I kept it pretty '80s, but homophobia like doesn't exist??

Title from song of the same name by Fall Out Boy, which was my original inspiration for this and then I didn't use it at all.

Jonathan embodies cool. That's Steve's first thought. He's got that thrift store swagger that makes a two-dollar, mustard yellow sweatshirt look effortlessly chic. He somehow makes denim-on-denim revolutionary. Scuffed sneakers with fraying canvas are suddenly so fashion-forward.

A camera hangs from his neck by a thick, black strap. Steve follows it up to his face: dark, almond-shaped eyes, pink lips downturned but curling at the corners like a Cheshire cat. He looks utterly bored and Steve eats it up.

*"Enchanté,"* Steve says when Nancy introduces them. He stops short of kissing the back of his hand, tempted as he is. Jonathan's face twists up in such a way that tells Steve he is not impressed by his charms.

"Steve, we've met," he says flatly. "We go to school together."

*Oh.*

"I knew that," he insists.

He didn't know that.

Jonathan's only there to take pictures of their soundcheck. God knows why. Not much to see, just the four of them – Steve, Billy, Tommy, and Chuck – doing shitty covers of Styx songs in their sweatpants.

Steve can't keep his eyes off of him. He watches him move around the room from behind his drumset, even missing a few cues and hitting the bass on the wrong beats.

When he fucks up "Come Sail Away" for the third time, Billy turns around to glare at him.

"What's your malfunction, Steve?"

He drags his gaze away from the boy with the camera, who's got his back turned to him, changing out film rolls. The back of his denim jacket is adorned with this amazing, photo-realistic maroon octopus. Steve makes a mental note to ask him where he got it before directing his attention to his lead singer.

"What? Oh, uh, nothing. Sorry."

Billy sighs dramatically. "Take five. Get your shit together, Harrington."

The rest of the guys groan. Steve, on the other hand, is glad for the chance to talk to Jonathan. He's sitting with Nancy at the bar now. Neither of them notices him approaching, so he takes his time studying the intricacies of the artwork on Jonathan's back.

"Where'd you get your jacket?" He asks, making Jonathan jump.

*Smooth, Harrington.*

Jonathan glances down at the faded denim. "Uh, that consignment shop downtown?"

“Trash and Treasures?” Steve takes a seat beside him. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees the little smirk on Nancy’s face but pays her no mind. “I know that place. I’ve never seen anything cool as this there.”

He reaches out to trace the tentacle cresting Jonathan’s shoulder. He’s sure he doesn’t imagine the slight responding tremor.

“My, uh...” Jonathan swallows. “My brother drew that.”

“Oh, cool. He’s very talented,” Steve compliments, slowly pulling his hand away. Behind Jonathan, Nancy gets up to leave. “Is he an art student or something?”

Jonathan snorts around a sip of Coke. “No, he’s thirteen.”

Steve’s eyes bug out of his skull. “Damn,” he says. “I was still drawing stick figures at thirteen. In fact, I think stick figures are still about all I can draw.”

Jonathan nods, lips pursed. “Same here. He’s a bit of a prodigy.”

“Harrington!”

They both turn to find Billy staring expectantly. Steve groans – just when he was getting somewhere.

“Are you staying for the show?”

Jonathan thumbs at the condensation on his glass. “I, uh-”

“I’d love it if you did,” Steve adds.

He does. And with renewed focus and confidence, Steve gives one of his best performances yet.

~::~~

“So, what did you think of Steve?”

Nancy perches on the counter, speaking around the cherry lollipop stuck in her mouth. Jonathan can smell its saccharine sweetness from

a foot away; it's almost nauseating.

"He's nice," he admits easily, shrugging one shoulder. He definitely had a few more thoughts than that, but none he wants to speak out loud quite yet.

Unfortunately, Nancy might not give him a choice.

"Nice?" She balks. "Come on, I want to know if you want to bang his brains out, not that you think he's *nice*."

Jonathan's face heats up a good hundred degrees. He could probably warm up his lunch on his right cheek.

"Shh," he hisses, glancing around the near-empty record store. The only customer, an older woman with hair teased to the heavens, quickly looks away when he meets her eye. "Isn't he your ex?"

Nancy rolls her eyes. "No. I was his beard. Just like I was yours before you came out to your mom."

Now it's Jonathan's turn to roll his eyes. "Who is perfectly accepting of my orientation, thank you. So you can stop reminding me of that dark, dark time," he says, and Nancy mocks affront, slapping her hand over her chest.

"Was it really so bad?"

"*Awful*," he teases her with a tight-lipped grin.

"How does this look?"

Jonathan looks past Nancy at Barb, her girlfriend, who's just come out of the backroom. She's got on a frilly pink dress with a lace collar that Jonathan assumes is meant for the prom.

The prom he won't be going to.

Not that he cares.

Nancy jumps off the counter, arms outstretched toward her girlfriend. "Gorgeous! Perfect! I knew it would," she gushes, fingering the ruffles

over Barb's chest. "You always look amazing."

They kiss. Jonathan doesn't mean to watch, but their happiness is palpable. It makes him happy just to be a witness.

He's so distracted, he almost doesn't hear the bell above the door ring.

He does, however, hear someone clear their throat to his right.

There's an apology already on his tongue when he turns to face the new customer and-

It's Steve.

He's smiling but tamps it down before speaking. "Yeah, I was wondering if you had any recommendations."

Jonathan tries not to gawk. He's pretty sure his mouth is hanging open.

"Uh..." He shakes his head, trying to collect himself. "Well, definitely not Styx."

Steve's face splits back into a grin. "Not a fan?"

"I prefer good music," Jonathan shrugs.

"Hey, 'Mr. Roboto' is a fuckin' classic."

"You're entitled to your wrong opinion."

Steve's smile never falters. It occurs to Jonathan that this might be the longest he's ever made eye contact with someone without breaking or blushing.

"What are you doing Friday night?"

"He's free!" Nancy pipes up from the back of the store, where she's waiting for Barb to change back into her clothes.

Jonathan shoots her a glare. "I was, um, just gonna study probably," he says to Steve.

“You’re always studying!”

“Well, a scholarship to NYU doesn’t just happen, Nance,” retorts Steve.

Jonathan feels himself gawking again. “You remember that?”

“I’ll admit that I sometimes struggle with an attention deficit, but it *was* just a few days ago,” he says. “Give me a little credit.”

Nancy sidles up beside Jonathan, knocking her shoulder into his.

“If I remember correctly, you were about to ask him out?” She says, staring up at Steve expectantly. Jonathan flushes hot and probably bright red.

“I was,” confirms Steve. “Friday?”

Jonathan nods, eyes fixed on the countertop.

~::~~

Steve doesn’t know how he never noticed Jonathan before. Now that he has, he sees him everywhere he goes. He sits two tables over in the cafeteria every day. They pass each other in the hall after both English and gym. Twice now he’s found they were parked side-by-side in the parking lot.

That’s how he comes to realize Jonathan’s thrift-shop-chic style is likely more out of necessity than a deliberate bid to look like some Seattle coffee shop regular. His car is a real junker. He probably saved up months for it.

It makes Steve almost ashamed of the shiny new BMW his dad bought for him.

None of that really matters to him though. He isn’t some elitist prick who looks down on people with less money than him.

In other words, he’s not Billy.

“Why are you so hung up on the weirdo anyway?” He asks Steve at lunch – where, as mentioned before, Jonathan is probably within hearing distance. He just hopes the cafeteria chatter covers up Billy’s voice. “He always looks so... grungy. Do they even have running water on the south side?”

“Probably bathes in a bucket out on the front lawn,” Tommy adds in a horrible, hillbilly-esque accent. He chortles at his own joke, seemingly unbothered by the fact no one else is laughing.

Steve stands and plucks the cigarette out from behind Billy’s ear. “Don’t be jealous, Billy-boy. It’s not a good look.”

~::~~

On Friday night, Jonathan waits for Steve in the record store. He’d insisted to be picked up here, because, well...

He didn’t want Steve to see his house. The little shack out on a lonely dirt road that he and his mother are barely scraping enough money together to keep living in. The siding is faded and splintered, the porch is rotting, and the screen door is practically hanging from its hinges.

He’s never cared before. He’s never hesitated to invite Nancy over, and not just because she’s the least judgmental person he’s ever met. Even Barb has been inside his house a time or two.

But for some reason, with Steve, the things he lacks make him feel inadequate in a way he really hates.

There are more important things than money, after all. And if Steve doesn’t think so, then, well, maybe Jonathan is better off that he’s almost half an hour late and probably not going to show up.

“Don’t worry,” Nancy tries to assure him, but even she’s looking much less confident than she’d been just a few minutes before. “He’ll be here.”

Another five minutes or so passes, and Jonathan is fuming – in that quiet, sulky way he fumes, anyway. He’s put on The Clash, loudly,



nevermind that he's seen Barb sitting in the corner with her hands over her ears.

"I should just go home!" He yells over the music. "This is stupid! I'm stupid!"

Nancy shakes her head vehemently and shouts back, "He's the stupid one!"

Neither of them hears the tapping on the window. Barb sees him first, and points it out to Jonathan, cringing at the harsh volume of "Should I Stay or Should I Go" on the sound system.

And then all the anger seeps out of him like a deflating balloon.

"Told you," Nancy gloats after turning the music down.

She lets him in, because Jonathan is too stunned to move, and Steve immediately begins apologizing.

"Sorry I'm late. My dad held me up after dinner to talk about *my future* or whatever," he says, waving his hand dismissively. Jonathan can only think that he smells amazing. "Anyway, I'm sorry. Do you still want to go out with me?"

Nancy answers for him by nudging him toward the door. As soon as they're out on the sidewalk, she closes and locks it with a wide, encouraging grin.

"Sorry again," Steve mutters, awkwardly rubbing the back of his neck.

If he didn't know better, Jonathan might think Steve Harrington was nervous. But that'd be ridiculous.

"You said that."

"Right." An oppressive silence falls over them as they walk toward Steve's car. Jonathan isn't sure what to say. What was so easy that night at the club now feels damn near impossible. "So, my friend is having a party. Would you... want to go to that?"

“Your friend?”

“Yeah, Billy.”

“Billy Hargrove.”

“That’s the one.”

It sounds like the worst idea ever. He can just imagine the sneers and snickers he’ll get as soon as Steve walks him through the door. He can already see the disgust on Billy Hargrove’s face.

“I, um... Maybe we could just, like, drive around or something?”

Steve smiles. “Come on, it’ll be fun. I promise we’ll leave if you’re too uncomfortable.”

Reluctantly, Jonathan agrees. And that’s how he finds himself in the foyer of Billy Hargrove’s house – which is more like a palace – with at least ten sets of eyes on him. A sea of silk and cashmere parts for him and his date, who at least has the decency to look a little bashful.

Jonathan’s way out of his element here.

~::~~

The first clue that Steve’s made a grave mistake comes when a girl hanging over another of their classmate’s shoulders makes fun of Jonathan’s jacket. The very jacket Steve had been so impressed by and couldn’t wait to borrow – as soon as they got to that point.

And he really, really hopes they get to that point.

He’s never met anyone like Jonathan. Someone who isn’t all-consumed by what everyone else thinks of them. Someone with ambition; someone who’s going places outside of the box their parents have molded for them.

By the look on Jonathan’s face, he fears he’s already screwed it all up.

They're at the bottom of the stairs, the only place people weren't congregating. And staring. So much staring. Jonathan runs a hand through his hair and looks at Steve with pleading eyes.

"Can you just get me out of here?"

"Already?" He's terrified that as soon as they walk out the door, they'll never speak to each other again. "We could, you know, go upstairs or something."

Jonathan huffs. "Look, if you brought me here just to get you off, then—"

Steve's heart sinks. "What? No, of course not! That's not- I just... It's quiet up there. We can, you know, talk."

"Talk?" Jonathan asks incredulously.

"Yeah, talk. I swear I'll behave. These hands will stay in these pockets," he says. And then, as if to demonstrate, he picks up a six-pack of warm beer from the table with his forearm. "See?"

Still, Jonathan is hesitant. So Steve grabs a bag of pretzels with his teeth.

"Come on," he says, muffled by the plastic in his mouth. "I'm utterly defenseless here... And utterly foolish."

He sees the façade crack as Jonathan fights a grin. His cheek dimples adorably.

"Fine," he relents.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah, fine."

Unfortunately, the first room they find contains none other than Billy Hargrove.

He tries to close the door, but Billy stops him. "Steve? Steve! Come in, have a drink." He stumbles toward them, shoving an unlit

cigarette into his mouth. When the door opens a bit wider, he freezes. "Oh."

"Jonathan, Billy. Billy, this is Jonathan."

"Well. Pleased to meet you, Jonathan."

Steve can tell by his tone that he's most definitely *not* pleased. But by then it's too late, as they're already taking seats on the chaise while Billy sprawls on the bed. His robe falls open, exposing his bare chest. Beside Steve, Jonathan shifts uncomfortably.

"Quite a party, eh?" Billy asks, not looking at them but at the end of the cigarette he's attempting to light. The lighter sparks a few times to no avail, and in frustration, Billy throws both it and the cigarette across the room.

Steve glances over at Jonathan, who has this look about him. A look that says he'd rather be anywhere but here.

"Quite," mumbles Steve.

"God, what a nightmare," Billy mutters, dragging himself up off the bed. He grabs one of the beers Steve brought, stares at it and hums pensively. "I'd tell everybody to leave, but... You know."

Steve knows. The laughing stock Billy would be come Monday morning if he ended the party before it was well and truly over – he knows it well. It's the same kind of bullshit that's made him absolutely sick and tired of his friends and everyone he knows.

He watches Billy set the beer back down on the dresser and stagger drunkenly to the door. "Hmm... I'm gonna need something stronger," he says, rambling to himself like he's forgotten Steve and Jonathan are in the room. "And some... crab legs or something. I'll just leave you two alone."

Once he's gone, Steve lets his gaze roam to Jonathan, his most apologetic of smiles on his lips. Jonathan's dark eyes are hard and flat.

"Can we go now?"

And that's it. The moment he knows he's gone and fucked it all.

"Heh..." Steve scratches at the back of his neck. In a desperate bid to keep this date going, he says, "Look, I don't want to take you home just yet. We can go anywhere you like, just don't make me take you home."

"It's late," says Jonathan, standing. "My mom works tomorrow and I have to watch my brother, so..."

Steve watches the octopus on Jonathan's back retreating and sighs in defeat.

"Yeah, okay..."

Asking Jonathan to prom is his last Hail Mary. His last attempt at assuring this disaster of a date is not the extent of their relationship.

Because he likes Jonathan. Likes him more than he's ever liked anyone.

And by the way Jonathan kisses him, he thinks – somehow, miraculously – that maybe his feelings aren't unrequited.

### **Author's Note:**

Can you tell where I lost my inspiration and just started using movie canon?